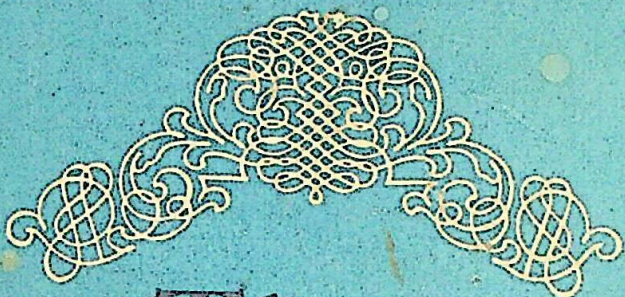
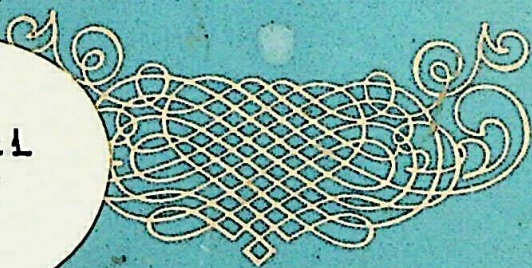


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Thus Spake Basava

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Basava Samiti, Bangalore

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Thus spoke basava.

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Thus spake basava.

THUS SPAKE BASAVA

903

ENGLISH RENDERINGS OF
BASAVA'S VACHANAS

by

A. SUNDERARAJ THEODORE
DEVENDRA KUMAR HAKARI

Price : 50 Paise

BASAVA SAMITI
BANGALORE 9

Published by

SRI B. D. JATTI,

CHAIRMAN,

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THE BASAVA SAMITI

expresses its deep gratitude

to

SRI MAHESHBHAI B. JHAVERI

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Bangalore

whose munificent and generous contribution

has enabled the Samiti to publish

this Volume of selected *Vachanas*

in memory of his father,

the late SRI BHOGILAL M. JHAVERI

WE are happy that our efforts to get the select *Vachanas* of Sri Basava translated into English have succeeded. There have been a number of English renderings of Sri Basava's *Vachanas*. Every scholar knows how difficult it is to translate any piece of creative literature. But we hope that our readers will find in this translation a beautiful blending of the true essence of the original and the elegance of the English language. We cannot adequately express our grateful thanks to Sri A. S. Theodore and Sri Devendra Kumar Hakari for accomplishing this assignment in record time. We are particularly grateful to Sri A. S. Theodore for going through the proofs of this publication.

The selection of the Kannada *Vachanas* of Sri Basava had been entrusted to a committee of scholars consisting of Sarvasri T. N. Mallappa, Retired Judge of the Mysore High Court, Siddayya Puranik and Jeerage Katte Basavappa. We place on record our appreciation of the valuable work of these scholars.

We would be failing in our duty if we did not mention here the continuous interest evinced in this work and encouragement given to us by our Chairman, Sri B. D. Jatti.

Our thanks are also due to Sri D. N. Hosali who has so nicely printed this book in so short a time. We thank many others who have helped in many ways in bringing out this publication.

FOREWORD

I COUNT it a real privilege to write a brief foreword to this book containing the English renderings of a selection of Basava's *Vachanas*. These selections, so to say, comprise gleanings from a large number of his sayings which taken by and large are capable of providing an insight into the saint's mind. Basava left no autobiography behind, nor are we fortunate in having records relating to his day to day life. There are no doubt evidences to the fact that he was born to devout Saivite Brahmin parents with prodigious intellectual endowment. He was prime minister at the court of Bijjala of Kalyan which he had to renounce on account of the spiritual mission he had undertaken, and the trials and tribulations he had had to undergo as a consequence in his latter days, are irrefutable facts.

His leading role in organising *Anubhava Mantapa* (Spiritual Academy) under the saintly Guru Allama Prabhu are easily elucidated from the ample inner evidences from the works which have come down to us practically intact. Details of his date of birth, his early life, how he lived and worked etc., though not documented, would appear to be irrelevant in the context of the rich spiritual legacy he has left behind for posterity, which after all is the essential Basava. Nevertheless there seem to be no two opinions as to the time of his passing away which was in the year 1167-68.

We are indeed privileged to have his teachings in which he has truly revealed himself, nay more, of the truth he was in constant engagement with, the intimacy of which he fervently desired to share with all men everywhere. From his teachings emerge a clearly defined picture of the saint and his personality. He is no stain-glass window saint, nor even a fanatical reformer. He was nevertheless a man of sturdy faith (God intoxicated) in One God and convictions, to which he passionately held.

He was above all human and truly concerned for man's spiritual support in the world of here and now and of salvation of his soul in the hereafter.

Eight centuries in the category of time is usually more than enough for human imagination to shelve however great an event to limbo, and perhaps designate it as a legend. That Basava has not passed on as legend but continues ever as a well-spring of a live faith, is witnessed today in his followers, the Lingayats or Veera Shaivites. His teachings contain a generous measure of heavenly wisdom and a deep sense of God, which make him a great Spiritual Guide especially today, when religion seems to be so much in retreat everywhere in the world.

Although a mystic, he was always practical in his spiritual direction, thereby endeavouring to keep a balance between the life of the spirit and the demands of every day life of humanity. Whatever may be the appeal of his teachings, one never fails to be impressed by his burning sense of God which can be the anchorage and support for all souls as they make their passage in this mortal world.

In a world where ethical values are fast eroding and spirituality is being overwhelmed by secularism, Basava stands as a guide-post for reconstructing society on the true image of man. His sociology is based on true democratic ideals, on common humanity and the dignity of the human person which has an unmistakable contemporaneous ring. It is astounding that even in that far distant dim age, his programme of reform highlighted the independence and equal status of women.

As a mystic, many streams of mysticism, both East and West, appear to make a confluence through Basava. Veera Shaiva philosophy is a rich field, much of it still unexplored, and therefore promises rich rewards for fruitful research and scholarship.

Hence as the 8th Centenary falls in 1967, when the Basava Samithi proposes to observe the occasion in a fitting manner, it

is naturally to be desired, that the teachings of this Master should be published as widely as possible in order that they may inspire the hearts and minds of many in other parts of the world also. It is my earnest hope that this little volume which will soon be released in all major metropolises of the world, will fulfil this purpose and in doing so bring much spiritual enrichment to all who read it.

B. D. JATTI,
Chairman, Basava Samithi,
Bangalore.

P R E F A C E

INDIA'S spiritual legacy can be likened to a rich skein of many strands. No other country in the world has a greater diversity of religions within her borders. This can be explained by the fact that perhaps no other country provides within her borders so wide a variety of races and also nowhere else could one see so many cultures in various stages of development. After the Aryans brought their religion into India about 5,000 years ago the religious history of India so to say, over the subsequent 2,000 years and more of torpor, suddenly became alive with movements of dissent, protest and revolt against the orthodoxy of this religion.

Mahavir and Gautama Buddha were the spearheads of such movements. As a matter of fact, few Hindu doctrines ever since have stood for long without being challenged, the *Vedas* included. (*Man's Religions* by John B. Noss, Macmillan & Co.). Caste based on the doctrine of *Karma* became the bone of contention. Religion is always a satisfying response to the basic human longings of men and women. It assumes various forms according to the need of man, satisfying his personality, responding to the demands of his conscience and heart and able to govern his will. It should speak to him of such vital questions as his human destiny and his proper end ; of life hereafter and of hope of salvation.

Although a glorious chapter in the history of religions and a great faith which had many a magnificent achievement to its credit, still its appeal to the common run of men who were thirsting for spiritual support and assurance in their common task and daily round, appeared to them as negative. It seemed to evoke a host of questions for which it could supply no direct answers. One was left to his own devices to draw his own consolations according to his own lights as best he can, leaving the

rest as incomprehensible, to the reasoning of pundits and the sophisticated speculations of philosophers. The situation was very much like what Milton said of the Church in his day "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed". Thus the substance of faith began to recede from the daily life of India and ritual began to proliferate to fill the gap. (*Man's Religions* by J. B. Noss, Macmillan & Co.). Yet the fact remains that because it was a living faith, it was sensitive enough to suffer criticism but nevertheless remained obdurate to change and reform.

Jainism and Buddhism and later Sikhism arose in their origins as heresies of Hinduism. They seriously questioned the validity of Hinduism as it did not appear to speak with one voice to all people alike, based as it was, on the doctrine of *Karma*, which sanctioned the practice of caste system, dividing man from man. They also found religion overlaid and cumbersome with far too many formularies and rituals to be real or meaningful. The rumble of protest soon gathered momentum and assumed the magnitude of powerful movements which offered a new way of hope of salvation for all alike and their appeal became naturally irresistible for all those who had turned away from the old faith as "souls inwardly pained".

The new doctrines were preached by men of original minds and of great reforming zeal who had felt this groundswell. In the 12th century, one such disturbed soul by name Basava arose who had had a new vision of faith through a surrender to a nobler conception of God. He preached a zealous devotion to Lord Shiva and strict adherence to the *Linga* as a symbol of discipleship. His teaching offered what appeared to the people as a new understanding of God and His true nature. Basava thus opened up a new way for those who followed him, of a life of joy and spiritual fulfilment. What he had done for the millions of Veera Saivites both in Karnataka (known as Lingayats) and in other parts of India, properly viewed, is not an isolated feature in this land. Such saints of spiritual vision have similarly arisen in this country in different parts from time to time in her long history who likewise awakened the hearts of their followers to a new hope of God. This was especially so

with the saints of the *Bhakti* or Mystic way such as Basava whose contribution to India's religious thought could not easily be by-passed.

Although he preached his doctrines and led his movement in one part of India it however was soon to spread over vast regions even as far as Kashmir and Nepal and claim many devotees all over the country. Its impact was significant, with a wide range of appealing spiritual insights. His mysticism which has a lofty conception of God had striking parallel with those of other well known mystics—both East and West—and his appeal therefore is easily universal.

The corpus of Basava's teachings is embodied in simple verse-form known as *Vachanas*. These were supposed to have been first inaugurated before a religious Academy (*Anubhava Mantapa*) in order to receive the imprimatur before propagation. Basava's philosophic and ethical teachings stemming from a fountain of *Bhakti* rank eminently with such others as Manikkavachagar, Pattinattar and Tirumular of the Tamil country as well as with Tukaram, Mehardas and Kabir.

"Mysticism," says Dean Inge, "may be defined as the attempt to realise the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or more generally, as an attempt to realise in thought and feelings the immanence of the temporal in the eternal and of the eternal in the temporal". It is in the main a return from the much-tangled involvement with the world to the fresh springs of inner life. It is a search for holiness. We find this explicitly stated in the well known Sermon on the Mount where Jesus has said that purity of heart or holiness is the condition on which God grants His beatific vision to His devotee.

"Blessed are the pure in heart
For they shall see God".

This has been variously described in different faiths which speak of the spiritual ascent of the soul towards illumination. *Bhakti* in spiritual life, of deep devotion and complete surren-

der to Grace in place of knowledge brings about the subsistence of a personal "I-Thou" relationship with its intimate communion of the *Bhakta* with a Divine Person. The term *Bhakti marga* or the Path of Devotion (Devotional discipline) is an extremely complex and manifold phenomenon. It has assumed so many forms as advocated by different spiritual leaders and teachers at various times through the ages.

"The word *Bhakti*," says the Jesuit Scholar Fallon (*Religious Hinduism* by Jesuit Scholar, St. Paul Publications, Allahabad), "generally translated as 'devotion' is rich with meaning: faith, love, loving surrender, devotional attachment, piety. It is closely associated with the word *Puja*, which means adoration, reverence worship; there is implied in these three words, a very personal relation, a concrete and existential attitude of reverential dependence and piety." God is of course the supreme object of *Bhakti*. This loving devotion says this scholar gives the *Bhakta* a much greater and more valuable knowledge of the Lord than any intellectual process of reflection or meditation.

S. India has a rich and long tradition of Saiva saints and Siva *Bhakti*. Manikkavachagar's *Tiruvachagam* is said to have been the fountain head of all later devotional poetry in the Tamil country; and Lord Siva was his Lord and Saviour.

"That day Thou owned me,
That very day, O, Lord, firm as rock !
Has Thou not made Thine own, my life, body and all ?
Is there any misery for me today, my Lord ?
Thou mayst cause pleasure or pain ;
Am I to question Thee ?

(from *The Temple Bells*)

This is a prayer from Manikkavachagar's *Tiruvachagam*. Siva devotion can be traced back to very early times. Saivism was at its zenith during the great Chola kings, mainly in the 7th and 8th centuries.

"He laid His hand on me..... The One most precious Infinite to earth came down My inmost self in strong desire dissolved I yearned ; Love's desire overflowed its banks ; my senses all in Him were centred. Lord, I cried with stammering speech and quivering frame ; I clasped adoring hands, my heart expanding like a flower."

In all the sayings of the Saivite saints, the greatest stress is laid on the importance of God's Grace. "This Divine Grace ; *Anugraha*, *Prasada*—is the means," says Fallon, "which habilitates the *Bhakta* to the obtainment and practice of true *Bhakti*." This divine Grace is often mediated through holy men and in particular, the *Guru*, who for the *Bhakta* holds the place of God Himself. It is worth noticing here that Sree Basava who essentially belongs to this stream of Saivite saints also stresses the importance of the *Jangama* and the *Sharana*.

Bhakti is a gift of the Lord to His chosen ones but these have to respond to the advances of His love. Grace can be described "as help given to man to enable man to realise what he essentially is, rather than a supernatural gift which divinises a mere creature", says Fallon. To the Christian mystic it is "the indwelling of God in the soul and the Trinitarian life we are called to share and contemplate in the Beatific vision." The Lord-Iswara is God conceived as a personal, all powerful, all merciful and benign who is both transcendent and immanent. Most *Bhakti* theologians agree that claims of devotion become meaningless without a personal God as differing from the God of metaphysics. The object of *Bhaktas'* devotion is *not God* but *a God*, the highest he can imagine or conceive. He is the Supreme Person and if this God of the *Bhakta* is not God Himself, then his devotion becomes idolatrous.

To be conscious, however dimly of the beyond is part of our human condition, which at the same time is also, the raw material of religion. No man can see God and live, much less can man grasp all knowledge of Him with his finite mind, unless God reveals Himself by His Grace. It is the latter of which most saints have spoken.

In order to make his spiritual ascent, the mystic has his own ladder, usually of three rungs—purgative, illuminative and finally the Union with the God of Grace. The purgative stage is as a rule characterised asceticism, renunciation of the world etc., as well as punishing the body through cruel ordeals of penances.

True mystic need not withdraw from life. There is no need to buffet the body either, in order to project the soul in its upward path. As Dean Inge says : "There is nothing in the system itself to encourage men to maltreat their bodies. Mysticism enjoins a dying life and not a living death." The spirit of mysticism aims at realising unity and solidarity everywhere. Here we find Basava in complete agreement. His ladder of spiritual ascent does not therefore conform to the usual one which prescribes ascetic practices, or negating the world nor "live laborious days." He firmly denounces those who practise cruel penances and subject their bodies to atrocious ordeals and privations. This will be clear to any perceptive reader of his *Vachanas*. His mystic approach is marked by an integrated process of body, mind and spirit acting in unison.

"The senses you leash,
so you may them spare
of vices ugly snare.
Thus you'll for future store
their vengeance and furore."

As a comparative study, the mystical ecstasies experienced by the Spanish saint, St. Teresa of Avila come close to St. Basava. "Let the will," said Teresa, "quietly and wisely understand that it is not by dint of labour on our part that we can converse to any good purpose with God, and that our own efforts are only great logs of wood, laid on without any discretion to quench this little spark". In such a situation one is tempted to think that Teresa entered the cloister by convention but became a saint by accident. "True," says Sackville West, "it might be an accident ordained by God, a mysterious and fortuitous choice of instrument." Be that as it may, it still does not explain the

mystery in mysticism nor describe what makes a mystic. In her case we know that she did not have to induce those rapturous ecstasies as a result of visions of God. But at the same time we know of other saints such as St. Peter of Alcantara who had to live in a cell only four-and-a-half feet in length, trained himself not to sleep more than an hour-and-a-half per day and ate a meal once in three days. St. Simeon Stylites passed the whole forty days of lent without touching food, never raised his eyes from the ground nor looked at a woman's face and wore continually a girdle of pointed nails to attain sanctity.

Mysticism was known to the Greeks; the word itself is Greek in root. The Greeks had mystic cults but they did not attempt to grasp it fully being too much preoccupied with the mind and its reason. It is no doubt easy to understand the intense desire for union with God and the passionate longing for the self to be lost in the infinite. Nevertheless it seems to be "a field of enormous mystery and removedness and at the same time it holds the simplicity of all great things; the maximum simplicity, even since its concern with the greatest of all." So we see one such simplicity in St. Teresa's spirituality. Here was a woman surprised by her own experiences. When one of the nuns remonstrated with her for going off into spiritual trances, she rejoined: "Hold your peace child, do you think that this depends on myself?" It looked as if God Himself was laying hold on her which Teresa called 'feeling of the presence of God' for which the body had to pay in physical agony and pain often. She was a woman unlearned in theology. She in fact was trying to live two different lives at the same time; the life of action and the life of contemplation. Hence as it emerges from a study of the foregoing instances, we are led to believe that mysticism is a Heavenly constraint laid on the chosen vessel of Grace for God's revelation of Himself.

The Doctrine of Election, that is to say, God choosing His instrument of Grace by preordination casts a strong slant in Basava's teaching also. He does not advocate discarding the business of living. Withdrawal from life in any regard does not accord with his idea of spirituality. Love of God, says

St. Bernard, does not mean that it is a state in which man ceases to love himself, that is, ceases to be concerned with his existential aspects of life ; " it is a state in which man loves himself only for God's sake." Basava's teaching affirms the world solidly only in the same way as St. Bernard does. His is a call, so to say, to true worship which can only be in spirit and in truth. It is in short a call to mature religion which the old Bard of Stratford on Avon called " Ripeness is all."

"The world is the Lord's mint," says Basava in one of his famous *Vachanas*, which affirms this doctrine, a doctrine which emphasises the relevance of the world and mortal existence to life Hereafter. The saint looks upon life as a probation, a preparation for the eternal fellowship and communion with the Supreme Being through His Grace. He therefore repeatedly speaks about the need for meditation and worship. In this he comes very close to Manikkavachagar who also in his *Arul Patthu* (Ten Songs on Grace) speaks of the same things. This particular *Vachana* can be considered as a master thesis into which most of his seminal teachings interlock. In this single telling image, he has piled a gamut of ideas pertaining to this life and the next, the oneness of all beings, sacredness of personality, common humanity, work and dedication, soulless devotion, idolatry and ritual, vanity of human desires and passions, Grace, sacramental living, solidarity of the universe, man, Nature and God—themes which occur frequently in his *Vachanas*.

Work which is man's right and through which he can not only praise his Maker but also use it as a means of Grace, divinely appointed, to attain his true end, by man's perversity was turned into a stone of offence, bemoans Basava. Caste was based on the kind of work a man did to earn his bread. Social structure conditioned by caste became vitiated with the prevailing notions of high born and low, based on the kind of work or occupation. It divided man from man and corrupted the springs of humanity and the brotherhood of all men under ONE God. That God is no respecter of persons unless he or she is a true devotee, finds frequent references in the *Vachanas*. He de-

nounces caste as sin against the Most High and His essential Unity ;

"In thy life's walk
e'en as peasant in the field
or what e'er calling, thy living yield,
let thy exertion ever
the spirit of work's
full impress bear.

The spirit of work (*Kayaka*) not only implies that work should be done well and with a sense of dedication, but whatever is done, should be done to the glory of God. Even the occupation one is in, is also His bestowal and hence we are accountable to Him as to how we acquit ourselves in it. Since it is the spirit of work which informs everyone in their several occupations, whatever they be, it therefore knits all alike into a social whole, that is a unity under God's service in which perspective, caste, Basava rightly considers, becomes totally irrelevant and meaningless.

" All that's born unexcepting
claim not the ear for begetting.
None but he to high born conforms
who the Divine intimation informs."

Basava truly salutes the devotee who follows an occupation, however humble. His several references to Vipra, Antyaja, Kakkaya, Chennayya, Machayya the so-called lowly of birth, following the so-called mean occupations proliferate his teachings. Here he reminds one of Ernst Tauler who said, "One can spin, another can make shoes ; all these are gifts of the Holy Spirit. I tell you, if I were not a priest, I should esteem it a great gift that I was able to make shoes, and would try to make them so well as to be a pattern to all."

Most mystics of the *Bhakti marga* tend to forget this and become open to the charge of indolent neglect of rightful duties belonging to their respective station in life. Unworldliness which characterises mystics such as Tukaram and Namdev

resulted in their wives and children often having to go without food. In this they resemble St. Francis of Assisi. Also buffeting the body with cruel penances was the usual process for most mystics. The rigorous mystic *yoga* practised by Father Joseph, the Capuchin monk passing through the Dark Night of the Soul before the Illumining Light, so vividly described by Aldous Huxley in his *Grey Eminence*; and also Luther's own experience of these when he was a monk in the Augustinian monastery, illustrate how unavailing they could be.

How distinctly different is Basava's. He follows another stream of mystics. St. Paul who was prone to get into mystic ecstasies, was a tent-maker by profession although a scholar; Kabir was a weaver, same as Tiruvalluvar, the famed author of *Kural*. An English poet, extolling work done with dedication and to the praise of God said :

He that sweeps the room
Makes that and the action fine.

By comparison, the other saints seem to have made religion their pre-occupation whereas Basava's religion made every form of work, "occupation plus". Like Basava, Kabir also attacked idolatry and condemned meaningless ostentation. Like the Saiva saints, Basava's teaching enfolds men of all castes who love God with unspeakable fervour and zeal, and it is a dominant idea with him throughout. Apart from this, Basava evokes several other familiar echoes also from the Saivite saints of the Tamil country. He has the same lofty conception of God as Appar, according to whom, God is not only transcendent but immanent ;

" The teacher that doth enter the soul
" The indwelling wealth "
(From *The Temple Bells*)

and that Siva exists everywhere in a subtle form and will give His vision to man if he is a true devotee, finds similar expression in both Appar and Basava.

" As fire in wood,
 As ghee in milk,
The Luminous one lies hid within.
First stick the churning stick of love,
Pass round the cord, intelligence, then twirl
And God will bless thy sight."

(Appar)

" As fulgent fire concealed in water
As sweet savour suffusing the plant
.....
..... Thy essence,
Lord Kudala Sangama.

(Basava)

Tayumanavar speaking of the All Filling God

" Place had no power to imprison His Presence
 No one can say, He is here, He is there.
Not in this place, not in that is the Godhead,
Unbounded by places, He bides everywhere."
 (Psalms of Saiva saints)

Basava's words are no less in import

" I behold none but Thee
 Where'er I lift mine eyes " etc.

and hymns His praise

" Stupendous as the universe
dimension disdaining, as the sky spread,
vast as vastness art Thou.
.....
.....
But lo ! Thy spark supernal I hold
in the palm of my hand ! "

The joyous abandon and ecstatic rapture characteristic of

mystics arises not only out of a realisation of the shoreless distance between the greatness of God and their own unworthy little selves, but the very same greatness of God becomes responsible through His divine mercy and Grace, to make Him indwell in them. Hence they sing in wonder and praise

“But Lo ! Thy spark supernal I hold
In the palm of my hand !”

Thus St. Bernard, the great mystic— a Cistercian monk and a contemporary of Basava— believed that the Holy Spirit played the part of the bond by which the soul was united to God and the spiritual life then became a participation in the Divine life. Mysticism in short underlines an unbounded, rapturous love of God in response to “The Vision Splendid” by mortal man as he could do no other. This is called man’s charity or Love which asks for no reward. “It is of the essence of love to be disinterested,” said another mystic. Hence in complete and utter surrender to the Highest, the mystic could perceive through Grace’s intervention, the illumination of his own soul. It is a state in which, according to Wordsworth—the Nature mystic, man becomes—

.....a living soul ;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.”

(Tintern Abby.)

The unity of all existence is fundamental doctrine of *Bhakti* or the mystic’s way.

“God is in all and all is in God.
His centre is everywhere
And His circumference is nowhere.”

This is the bestowal of the beatific vision which only asks for God as Basava did ; as did St. Thomas Aquinas also. When the latter was asked in a vision by God to name any reward for his great service to Him as a devotee, he cried out—“Only Thee, Only Thee, My God !”

Like Tirumular, a Saiva *yogi* of the 8th century, Basava also wraps up profound truths in seemingly simple language. This he must have done perhaps because he wished that his teachings should reach the lettered as well as the unlettered. He also wished to release religion from the trammels of formalism, ridden with unnecessary rituals and make worship practical, simple, and meaningful for everybody. Since the emphasis is on inward and spiritual worship, the Saiva saints believed that without *Bhakti*, *shastraic* knowledge was useless.

"Why chant the *Vedas*, hear the *Shastras* lore?
Release is theirs and theirs alone,
Whose heart from thinking of its Lord
Shall ne'er depart."

(Appar).

Basava's *Vachanas* have a homespun quality, direct, simple with metaphors and analogies drawn from folkways and the homely wisdom of the people. He addresses the people in their own languages so to say. Nevertheless for the percipient reader, they are deep sprung with spiritual insights and charged with mystic overtones. The mystics themselves were most conscious of their helplessness when attempting to translate their experiences into intelligible words. Like the poet, they are obliged to take refuge in symbol and metaphor which make what they say more potent and evocative than dry matter of fact statements. Their metaphors attempt to convey a supernatural experience in the language of everyday visible things which are capable of connecting up the mind of the hearer with the reality beyond the senses of which they speak. If sacrament is described as "the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace," their symbolism seems to remind us that the things that are seen are temporal while the things that are not seen are eternal. Basava's reference to sacramental living and the indwelling grace is typical of all mystic utterance.

The spontaneous spiritual gush and outpour which is the result of the constraint of the spirit from which the mystic seeks release, usually leaves language limp in his hands. Language here faces naturally some problems as it can only furnish poor,

sometimes even misleading and wholly inadequate images for 'communicating' spiritual truths or to discern them. The native idiom in which the saint spoke is rich with metaphors taken from everyday life which spring with special force in the context in which he uses them. The frog caught in the jaws of a snake and doomed to die, flicking its tongue out to catch a passing fly; cattle caught in mire kicking their legs for release but only to sink deeper still; Lord Mahadeva Shetty opening his store with truth for ware, etc., etc., appear as parables to teach a wholesome truth. Folk sayings such as the fence devouring the harvest or mother's breast turning into a drain of poison are equally good grist for his mill. St. Teresa's analogies also belong to the same genre when she deals with matters of high spirituality. They are also drawn usually from the most realistic sources. Fish taken from the river in a net cannot live and so it is with souls taken out of heavenly water; slowness in spiritual progress resembles the pace of the hen, etc. Similarly the comparisons the mystics use have the same packed quality as a proverb.

Mystic utterance in its very nature should baffle the best of translators for there is always a "More" to whatever is said. To get this More in a foreign tongue, however expressive, runs the risk of concealing instead of revealing the true or essential mind of the saint sometimes. Words in this context carry a trace of the transcendent. Words which express time and space have to be treated for the dimension of the transcendent without making them lose their specificity or get diffused in the process. Language for expressing the ineffable with which the mystic is in constant engagement cannot but pose many inhibiting limitations for the translator. The specificity of words becomes loaded beyond their normal ration not by intention but by compulsion of necessity.

Vers libre or free verse prompts itself to be employed for the purpose of translation as it could be of help to make the translation both compact as well as terse. But the problem still remains for a free translation might run into dangerous shoals of either dissipating emphasis or misleading in meaning. Certain

liberties even with free verse form become inevitable if the essence is not to be estranged from the text. Rhyme was as a rule not strained for except where it gained in effect and provided the punch for the sequence of ideas.

This translation has no high claims to make except perhaps that it has tried to keep faith with the original in structure, form and content. At the same time it has had recourse to every nuance possible which was capable of exploiting the interiority of words and the inner resonances of language to render communication easier. The translators are conscious of the many defects and shortcomings in this attempt. But we do trust that our readers would be generous enough to take our intention for the deed, for our avowed intention has always been activated by a sincere desire to present the genuine Basava to them. In these days when the acids of secularism are threatening to corrode spirituality everywhere, we believe that Basava can be a symbol of that undying spirit which can inspire us in building a new society.

It is in the fitness of things that we here acknowledge our deep debt of gratitude to Sree Basaveswar Samiti and its Chairman Sri. B. D. Jatti for the privilege given to us in this undertaking.

We would also here wish to record our profound sense of indebtedness to Prof. R. C. Hiremath and Prof. G. S. Halappa of the Karnatak University, and to Sri. Siddayya Puranik, I.A.S., of the Mysore State Government for their guidance and many valuable suggestions throughout the preparation of the drafts but for which this work might have proved considerably more difficult.

Dharwar
March 1965

A. SUNDERARAJ THEODORE
DEVENDRAKUMAR HAKARI

THUS SPAKE BASAVA

1

As fulgent fire concealed in water
As sweet savour suffusing the plant—
As fragrance freed from the unfolding bud—
As love's promise in the burgeoning maid—
—Thy essence
My Lord, Kudala Sangama.

2

I behold none but Thee
where'er I lift mine eyes.

Thou art the form
of the unbounded universe.

Thou its eye and
Thou its visage ;

Thine its shoulders
and its feet—

O Lord Kudala Sangama !

3

Stupendous as the universe,
dimension disdaining as the sky-spread,
vast as vastness art Thou.

Firm Thy holy feet fixed
in fathomless depths beneath—

Beyond soaring skies
Thy sacred crown—

Thou art past understanding,
invisible, unimageable.

But lo! Thy spark supernal I hold
in the palm of my hand !

4

Names many,
Thou art but ONE

E'en as the chaste spouse
knows none but her lord.

Take heed and kneel not
to strange Gods.

Or you face the frown of His wrath
smiting off your nose and ear.

What manner of men—they
who crave for crumbs
from frippery faiths ?

O Lord, Kudala Sangama.

5

In vain oblations offer
and blessings beseech of
Marayya, Beerayya—devil and demon ;
Kalayya, Doolayya and Ketayya,
on infant, maid and woman,
heavy with child.

Diverse gods in diverse places
niched in plant, flower,
tank and well ;
in town and hamlet
dwell the dumb deities
under the sheltering span
of the banyan tree.

Pity them that supplicate
these seamy shapes,

while Thou remain,
The Bestower All !

6

If Thy hand be upon it
the dead wood sprouts ;

With Thy favour
the dried cow, its udders fill ;

Look in mercy—
and lo ! potion ambrosia turns.

Thy Grace endowing—

e'en on earth, our days
with fatness filled to overflowing—

O Lord, Kudala Sangama !

7

In vain they call
upon the Lord

without faith or love manifest.

Far stray the worldly
from the paths of faith.

Does not Lord Shiva heed and hie
to the cry of the righteous ?

But empty of faith or love, they
that call upon Thee,

Shall surely sink in the pit of doom
—says

My Lord, Kudala Sangama.

8

Ascribe not love of music to the Lord.
No lover of music HE ;
nor lover of *Vedas* for

Vedic lore, loves not HE !

Consider Ravana !—
for muses' favour
forfeited half his life's span !

Or Brahma—
versed in *Vedas*,
with head, paid he his fee !

No lover of music, nor lover of *Vedas* HE,
save, hold the devotee
in felicity.

O Lord Kudala Sangama.

9

On earth has ope'd
Lord Mahadev Shetty's store—
for trade in Truth for ware.

He ready replies to custom
in faith, full fraught,

but mute remains
to meand'ring minds.

A just balance holds HE
nor tilts the scales
for gain or loss.

O Wisdom amazing ! Lord Kudala Sangama.

10

What profiteth kama
to the lover of God ?

Or anger avail
who treads the tracks of saints ?

Or cupidity to him
that merits of devotion minds ?

Why then lust—
incarnate grace avowing
in sacramental off'ring ?

How then, purity of heart
to him of haughty looks and arrogance ?

In the hearts of the righteous
shall Thou e'er abide,

Lord, Kudala Sangama.

11

Is he within or without—
who this habitation owns ?

Unkempt this house—
grass everywhere grown
and downed in dust !

Is the owner within or without ?
Body, inclined full to vanity—
mind, given to naught, but lust,
the owner roams without !
O Lord Kudala Sangama.

12

My utterance and my acts
consort not.

For behold ! My Lord,
my heart is far from pure.

Thou dost dwell
where word meets deed—

Lord Kudala Sangama.

13

The Chakora yearns for the moon.
The lotus longs for the dawn.

The bee in scent seeks for honey ;

and I—in meditation
ceaseless search for Thee.

Lord Kudala Sangama !

25

14

The ripening moon
bestirs the sea to swell,

And lofty billows lower
as the orb'd light wanes.

If so be—

Did the ocean wail
when earth's shadow hid the moon?

Did the moon desist Agastya
when he sucked the sea?

When woes betide—
The world forsakes you,

But Thou e'er
the friend of the friendless!

O Lord Kudala Sangama.

15

Lord! Stretch Thy hand
and lift me to Thy presence;

for, like cattle caught in mire,
jerk their legs for release,
only to sink deeper still,
thus situate I stand.

Treat me Lord
as feckless beast of Thine.

Save me, ere
he who owns the field,
strikes me as stray cattle
and abuse Thy holy name.

26

16

Make me an Ekthar, Lord.

My chest—

a chamber for sound,

my head—

in hollow gourd's stead,

my nerves—

full stretched as strings—that

my fingers may raise—

the two and thirty ragas—in Thy Praise

O Lord Kudala Sangama !

17

Would it be worship—

love lacking ?

Would it be work—

devotion denying ?

Such remiss in

love and devotion—

Each a travesty of truth shall be

in worship and in toil.

A fetching form or candy cane

in picture, tho' allure,

they but reality reflect,

analogies for desires' dupes !

So remains, devotion in name,

hollow as hollow can be !

O Lord Kudala Sangama.

27

18

My words—
 Thy ambrosial name besprung ;

my mind—
 thinking thoughts of Thee ;

Thy image—
 my eyes, full filled ;

Thy glory—
 exalting mine ear—

like the bee, deep drunk
 at Thy lotus feet, I lie—

O Lord Kudala Sangama !

19

Should I but to Thee in surrender,
 my love declare,

Thou wilt with tribulation test
 and my strength, strike severe ;

with affliction, prostrate my mind,
 And my load of riches lost entire.

Yet, if I notwithstanding
 steadfast and unseared stand,

lo ! Thou Thyself a shaken be
 by my devotion and constancy !

20

Of what avail—

tho' thy palm reveals plenteousness
if gifted not with length of days ? or
a craven heart, though a spear hold ? or
a looking glass before lightless eyes ? or
a diamond in the monkey's paw ?—

Would Grace be gained
a *Linga* in hand despite—
without the ways of truth
and of saints

Of Lord Kudala Sangama ?

21

Ere—

the even of life arrives
as shearing sunset,

with silver locks
and shrunken cheeks ;

signs of age in body manifest—
as toothless mouth and
back bent,

despoiled in form,
wrecked by waning strength,
leaning on another's lead,

and alas ! the final call—bow down
to Lord Kudala Sangama !

29

22

Say not—
The morrow or another day—
is proper for praise to employ.

Now, as yesterday, the same
is every day—

for worship and for Grace.

Day to day, no difference make
and alike stand in God's sake.

Sanctified is each day
with the mind's full stay—

On Lord Kudala Sangama.

23

"Auspicious" say for marriage
if by saints sanctified
whate'er the hour,

and divine destined
with conjunctions complete,

the moon and stars
in full aspecting.

Today's the best day ever.

Then, yours for sure,
the merit for worship—

Of Lord Kudala Sangama !

30

24

Of what reward reckon,
the triune charity denied?

Poor profit be
my dancing, singing, learning!

They also serve—
the peacock with its dance;
the bee with its song;
the parrot, its learning....

Nought delights Him
but devotion!

Lord Kudala Sangama.

25

Let the sinner return
and the perverter of knowledge,

and to the Lord cry!
"Other refuge have I none".

He, in answer, your sins shall purge,
and a golden mount for a contrite heart,
requite.

Pray then, to
Lord Kudala Sangama.

26

The Lord's mint, this world—
whence you issue His impress borne,
Shall find Heaven acknowledge His mould.
If found wanting here below,
likewise above, the reckoning show !
Lord Kudala Sangama.

27

Virtue and vice
alike are in the mind.
Blessed are the meek
with heaven o'ershadowing.
Hell's the portion
to the heart unrelenting.
Avail nought the cry :
"To the Lord be glory"
"Blessed are the saints".
Prevail not they, against Heaven's doors !
O Lord Kudala Sangama.

32

28

Hark ! Heaven and earth,
each can other be.

With truth on your lips,
you Heaven enjoy ;

With the false tongue,
you unloose hell.

Heaven's e'er reward for righteousness ;
hell is requital for evilness.

Thou the witness,
the KNOWER ALL—

My Lord Kudala Sangama.

29

I can't the halo of saints attain,
holding Heaven and earth
as not the same.

To what you can compare
but sav'ring the sapless end
of sugarcane,—

when to hold—only after
life's spark's extinguished—

union with the Lord
can be established !

O Lord Kudala Sangama.

30

Masters and servants ! all
who the *Linga* worship and adore ;
and invoke for worldly goods and store—

Masters and servants ! all
who the *Linga's* powers avow
imploing His favours to bestow.

Fear not !
For the earth is HIS.
Hence 't is yours to share
all that therein is.

And this, I vouch
with all the Saints—
of Lord Kudala Sangama.

31

Thy *Maya* enshrouds the universe,
yet my mind possesses Thee !

Therefore am I greater than Thou,
greater than the universe tho' Thou be !

The mirror images the elephant
e'en so, I contain Thee !

My Lord Kudala Sangama.

34

32

Hearken ye ! All
that in the universe dwell—

Two confronting knights, their oaths declare—
"To vanquish"—for the Lord's side,
"To victory" the votaries rejoin.

Lo ! The sword of Truth
with the flashing edge let loose,

the devotees, the day won !
Lord Kudala Sangama.

33

If I say—The ocean's great,
it but the earth embowls !

If I say—The earth's great,
it but the serpent's hood upholds !

If I say—Adisesha's great,
'tis but the mark on Parvati's brooch !

If I say—Parvati's great,
she's but Lord Shiva's spouse !

If I say—Lord Shiva's great,
He but dwells on the mind's edge

of the *Sharanas* of Lord Kudala Sangama !

35

34

The rich raise temples,
but poor as I am—
this, I shall do—

my legs for pillars,
my body for sanctum,
my head, the golden *kalasa*
complete.

O hearken ! Lord Kudala Sangama—
matter passes,
but spirit abides.

35

Immense is the elephant—
but does that make the goad small ? Nay we say.

Vast is the mountain—
but does that make the diamond mean ? Nay
we say.

Gross is darkness—
but does that make light, light ? Nay we say.

Prodigal is forgetfulness—
but does that make the mind that holds Thee
poor ? Nay we say.

36

36

Hearken Ye !

Ignorance flees before
knowledge's power.

Darkness rolls up,
when light dawns.

Error vanishes
as Truth's enthroned.

Iron gleams into gold,
at touchstone's magic feel.

And lo ! with *Sharanas'* witness,
my mind's enraptured !

O Lord Kudala Sangama.

37

O Lord, My Father !
Make me lame
that my feet to stray unlured be.

Make me blind
that from passing scenes unsnared I be.

Make me deaf
that by vanity claimed not I be.

Fixed be my mind, but
to the feet of Thy saints, I pray,

My Lord Kudala Sangama.

37

38

Fie ! upon my mind—
to errant passions, a prey !
Like as a dog, festooned palanquin ariding,

wav'ring and wand'ring it is,
fain tho' I would on Thee,
it constant remain.

Raise me with Thy Grace
and hold fast my mind
firmly to Thy feet.

This I beseech—
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

39

Thine this body, I claim,
for other than Thine, it cannot be.

Thine this mind, I avow,
for other than Thine, it cannot be.

Thine my riches, I extol,
for other than Thine, it cannot be.

These treble things I own
as Thine. Then,

could my heart to other thoughts turn ?

My Lord Kudala Sangama.

40

These I fear not—

The creeping snake,
The leaping flame,
The swishing sword,
Save one—

Covet another's wife
or my neighbour's wealth,
high prized these lures
tho' by the world be.
Consider Ravana's lot !
tho' dauntless of fear was he.
Thee, fear I ever—
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

41

Hear Ye, my brethren—

The bathers in the brook !
Ablution ne'er merits attain
tho' water o'er you shall flow.
If unforsaking ye retain
thy greed for another's gain,
and lust after another's wife,
the stain shall all remain
and the brook its babble
shall still maintain—
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

42

If my mind's a truant
and inconstant be,
a vow, so be it,
in Thy name I lay—
"As Goddess to cherish
my neighbour's wife."—
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

43

Pity be your state—
tho' an elephant you ride
or a steed it may be ;
and *kumkum* and *kasturi* your body adorn,
my brethren,
if truth be not your portion
nor virtue's fruit your gain.
Like perch atop the mad elephant
your pride careers to forefated end,
self-doomed to damnation, they
who attain not
Lord Kudala Sangama.

44

They toil in vain
 who toil not with aim,
for the end rewardeth nought.

Tho' they give away
 their substance in alms,
the end availeth nought.
Vain is your labour
and your giving gainless
without the indwelling
of My Lord Kudala Sangama.

45

Counter not anger with anger,
 for what merit can it be?

Body flounced by fury,
 frazzles human dignity.

Mind with anger aflame
 speaks not understanding
e'en as fire in the hearth
 enflames not the neighbours'
but brings ruin on thine own !
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

46

Fearless of soul and self undesiring
few there be.

The smile of fortune
who can scorn ?

None I reckon will a lie scruple
for a hapless deed
from scrutiny shield !

Fearlessness and undesign
none but in *Sharanas* appear,
Grace by Thee vouchsafed,
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

47

These thy concern ever be—
A soul becalmed
and self at peace,
ere, thou mend the world
or wail another's woe.
For such of no account holds
Lord Kudala Sangama.

42

48

Hear all ye !

who of valour boast, honour and piety !
Bravery ever the enemy's esteem earns ;
honour ever the lady's love evokes ;
and piety, the *Jangama's* praise shall meet.
When these in thy life manifest issue
shall gain acknowledgement due
from Lord Kudala Sangama.

49

In alms giving

my Self I gratify ;
before sacred signs
in holy awe, I bend.

Notwithstanding, of little worth I hold,
he who wears the signs
which his living life disowns.
Witness Thou be !
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

43

50

Many there be—

who by rubric and rite
offering make of milk,
cream, butter and gur.

But none found I

with *ambali* appear
nay, none in *sharanas'* ilk,
save, Madara Chennaya
this lowly off'ring make.
to Lord Kudala Sangama !

51

Meat and wine, feast the flesh ;
lust of the eye, a lecher makes.

What profit tho'
a *Linga* one dons,

when thy life's linked not
with *Linga's* ways ?

Jangama's wrath invite they shall,
and escape ne'er
their woeful end—
self-doomed to damnation—

Lord Kudala Sangama.

52

When you another greet
 "Come on in" and "How d' you do,"
would your escutcheon smudged be ?

When to your neighbour
 you offer a seat,
would the earth crack at your feet ?

When kindly words you employ,
 would thy brow and bowels break ?

Your virtue redeems you
 tho' empty your hand for alms be.

If so, for virtue you've none to show,
 clipped nose as rebuke anon
 will flow
from Lord Kudala Sangama.

53

True devotee to his brother bows ;
 with soft words let your prayer be ;
for penance, upon kind words draw ;
they are e'er supreme in Grace's scale.

Hence none pleases
 where these virtues fail.
Lord Kudala Sangama.

45

54

These your words shall e'er be—
as a string of pearls,
as glint of faceted gems,
as spark spurting crystal,
hailed by the *Linga* as
"worthy and true."
How shall the Lord
His grace bestow,
where speech tho' perfect
with life doesn't avow?

55

Hear ye !
and take to heart—
the words of sages
as touchstone for yours !

Yours the triumph,
with faith in *Linga* unforswear
my brother, you believe.
Same as neem leaves
is the saying of saints
of Lord Kudala Sangama—
Hurting to the tongue,
but healing for the stomach.

56

To what can I liken but
to the streams of milk, or
the jaggerine mire,
or sugar as sandy stretch,
the words, the *Sharanas* spoke !

While these await,
fool am I, the former lore invoke !

Alas ! My delving for a spring
hoaxed my hopes and brackish water brings !
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

57

You far sooner bespeak—
a victim of a serpent bite,
or one held in spirit's might ;
but ne'er one in riches' thrall !
But lo ! They speak at poverty's fall,
like magic wand beck'ned !
Lord Kudala Sangama.

None doth afright
when the house is afire.

Whence can one flee
when the earth's aflame?

To whom shall I cry, if
the dam devours the water penned,
fence feeds on fields' yield,
a mistress in her own homestead
be thief and false instead,
and mother's breast, turns pois'nous drain
to snuff out life, and not life sustain?
O Lord Kudala Sangama.

59

How can I worship Thee,
my Lord?

If I with milk my off'ring make,
the calf from its dam has sucked it first!

If with water my oblation pour,
the fish in the stream has had its draught!

If with flower I Thee festoon,
the bee for honey had called at its core!

Thus forestalled and frustrate I stand
tho' pristine pure the offer'ng I demand.

Hence, look upon, I pray,
whate'er the off'ring be,
in pity and in favour
Lord Kudala Sangama.

60

What be they—

Mari and Masani ?

None other they, than

thy impure look

and false tongue,

which e'er to Mari belong.

Mari forsooth is forgetfulness

of Lord Kudala Sangama !

61

Consider these !

Doesn't the crow

gleaning a grain

caw its entire clan ?

A hen espying a stray morsel

clucks others to share ?

If to Shiva, thou,

a devotee avowed,

a call to thy fellows,

thy worship shall be.

Or else, meaner than the crow and hen

Reck'ned you'll be—by

Lord Kudala Sangama !

62

Let not the world ask me
as if a stranger—
“Who is he? Who is he? Who is he?”

I would they acknowledge me
“He's our own, our own, our own”.

Accept me as Thy son,
of Thine own household,
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

63

In vain they seek Thee
by pain inflicting on body and mind.
Let them, the world consume.
Reck not they the pains they bear
in full measure, is *Linga's* share?
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

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64

In pomp and panoply
when the lordly come,
 abject obeisance
marks thy welcome.

When the lowly devotees appear
 suffer ye not their stay
 and "Get thee away" they hear !

His wrath shall this avenge
 and smite them down betime
 with their noses despoiled !
 My Lord Kudala Sangama.

65

Like pouring of blood
 your oblation shall be
if thy mind wrathful be,—
same as a flower
a sinner shall offer,
or like probed wound be.

None find I on level in love
 with Madara Chennayya ;
None a peer for boundless love
 to Dohara Kakkayya,
save, Madivala Machayya
 whose love with them in measure meet ;
and e'er ready for immolation
 for proof, if need be,
 of his sole dedication to
 Lord, Kudala Sangama.

51

66

He who vaunts his deeds
 and to self, their glory meeds,
 shall Shiv's herald, relentless arraign
 his conscience of guilt's stain.
 Boast not then—
 "I've served the *Linga*
 "Or the *Jangama*"—

They serve not thy need,
 save a lowly heart, that
 at its call, HIS blessing grant—
 Lord Kudala Sangama.

67

All ye that boast—
 of labour and largesse
 in the name of *Linga*,
 mark ye these words !

Such be like him
 who enters the shrine,
 leaving his sandals behind,
 while his body before the Presence bows,
 stays with sandals at the door, his mind !

Amass not money unremitting,
 for surely its end, misery begetting.
 Commit same to the common call
 of the *Sharanas* of
 Lord Kudala Sangama.

68

In vain the anthill you belabour
with might !

It kills not the serpent secure
from sight !

Why the body in penance punish,
when evil, sore in soul, flourish ?

HE knoweth thy heart
Lord Kudala Sangama !

69

Thus the *Sharanas* e'er be known—

The firm resolve—
"I'll ne'er covet another's wealth".

The steadfast will—
"I'll never lust for another's wife".

The resolute mind—
"Inflict no harm on brother man".

The sure will to affirm—
"The *Linga* and *Jangama*,
the twain are ONE".

The unswerving faith—
in *prasada's* grace indwelling.

All else from HIS favour, debarred go,
who for these merits,
have none to show,

Lord Kudala Sangama.

53

70

They demur not from buying
The hare hawked by hunter.

But none'll scarce consider
tho' monarch, his body deceased !

So is human life regarded
as meaner than the hare's !

Hence hold fast to faith
in Lord Kudala Sangama.

71

What manner of man be he
who bids another his proxy be—

"Feed thou for me and
my wife's bed share" !

Ill fares thy worship, conclude,
when body or heart
each the other exclude.

Of little worth is worship
except in unison
thy heart and mind attune.

Lord Kudala Sangama.

72

Better far a servant, nay
 a slave of one by caste disdained,
 if he be Shiv's devotee,
 rather than a kingdom gain
 from one of greed's ungodly stain.

Better forest leaves
 in earthen pan fried,
 be your sustenance
 with Heaven's smile
 on your countenance—

Lord Kudala Sangama.

73

Tho' held fast for prey
 in the snake's deathly jaws,

Yet may the frog
 his springy tongue flick
 for a passing fly!

Days numbered
 under death's sentence,
 what gains the thief
 tho' fed on milk or ghee?

So prosper they—
 who trust their days
 to the stomach that perishes
 and in falsehood, their way flourishes!

Far from favour, they,
 of Lord Kudala Sangama.

74

The senses you leash,
 so you may them spare
 of vices' ugly snare.
 Thus you'll for future store
 their vengeance and furore !
 Did Siriyala and Chengala
 disdain domestic delights ?
 Did Sindubhallala forsake
 felicities of conjugal bliss,
 or life's sweet off'rings miss ?
 If thy mind on the Lord be set
 why cast about by greed's fret,
 for another's wife or wealth to gain ?
 Far from Thy feet
 they remain !
 Lord Kudala Sangama.

75

With stone my feet bound,
 and cork my neck around
 to such, my life's akin.
 I neither surface skim
 nor down to bottom's dim.
 Thine aid Lord,
 I beseech
 to flee this despair ;
 and in Thy cov'ring care,
 reach
 yonder realms fair.
 Lord Kudala Sangama.

56

76

Squand'ring all his substance
in wasteful living
and life unbecoming,
at last to repentance,
the sinner's heart returns !

The dog's milk can,
but feed its young,
and to *Panchamrita*
ne'er belong !

Vain, thy riches,
if serve not they,
the *Sharanas* of
Lord Kudala Sangama.

77

None different—

The bowl of brass
which food contains
from the looking glass,
for the metal's the same.
Both bear brass' name,
yet use determines
one of vessel's line,
the other, a mirror fine !

78

Worship of *Linga*, sans faith,
for little worth, it passeth.

So ungracious thy worship
and inept,
that e'en thy libation
leaves the *Linga* unwet !

Nor thy mind, of *Linga* unmindful
makes it non est !

The self same prof'ring
to *Jangama* bestow.

And lo ! the drench unfailing
will instant follow
on the *Linga's* sign designate,
tho' it's an image inanimate !
Lord Kudala Sangama.

79

How awry !
Milk in libation prompt, they pour
on stone carved serpent
where it shows.

But kill ! kill ! the shout goes
when the live serpent sights afore !

They feed not the devotee
and bid him depart ;
but to the *Linga*
which eats not,
in vain, food off'ring's made !

58

80

Of no avail thy reading
if God is one or two in being,
unless thy heart to *Sharanas* moves
as wax to fire in melting proves.

Nought wilt thou receive
unless thou believe
the *Linga* and *Jangama*
are one and ne'er twain.
Empty are thy words,
if they weave e'en
a garland of praise,
Lord Kudala Sangama !

81

Whate'er thou reckon
as the morrow shall bring,
why not the same on
this day, why,
this instant spring ?

Nor fear whate'er its conveying ?

"One born, must die," it's said.

What's written shall be
as fate's ordaining,
e'en Hari nor Brahma non-excepting !

82

Be it five days, thy life's span—

't will reck'n for full measure with a good name;

Be it four days, thy life's span—

't will reck'n for full measure with a good name;

Be it three days, thy life's span—

't will reck'n for full measure with a good name;

Be it two days, thy life's span—

't will reck'n for full measure with a good name.

Far more worth is five days
of godly devotion

than an age without dedication !

Bear the *Sharanas'* words
in thy bosom,

and thy life, e'en brief as a day—
shall be full and bless a goodly name !

Lord Kudala Sangama.

In thy life's walk,
e'en as peasant in the field
or whate'er calling, thy living yield,
let thy exertion ever,
the spirit of work's
full impress bear.

Fain would I behold
the devotee's feet,
whose great alms-giving
comes not of a tainted hoard.

The *Jangama* whose
homilies he hears then
will his abode enter
deeming it Kailas ;
and the *Linga* adore
as the holiest on earth.

To such I bow
and belief bestow.
Lord Kudala Sangama.

84

Incline Thine ear, Lord
as I plead my cause :
all Shiva's votaries I,
in equal esteem hold,
deeming all as one—
Vipra or Antyaja—
low born and high.

And I believe, unfailing
in the world, as Thine.
Should these words of mine
my pleading fail,
may Thy rebuke mar
my visage, denosed and dreadful,
Lord Kudala Sangama !

85

Why not reply return
and your *gotra* name ?

Why drool on sand
and fuddled, gaze on ground ?
Suffice it to claim
thou to Madara Chennayya
and Dorra Kakkayya belong ?
Lord Kudala Sangama.

The babe born of woman
 ripens for birth, untouched,
 tho' in fouling envelope couched !

The same passage in common
 serves the babe, the world to enter,
 as also for offal centre.

All passions alike attend :
 Love and lust
 Peace and rage
 Joy and sorrow,
 all humanity's heirs below,
 unregarding, high born or low.

What mean the *varnas*, then,
 when none in origins
 without tainting begins ?

By these signs
 shall ye know them :

The blacksmith in his smithy smelting,

The washerman washing clothes a beating,

The weaver at his loom, labouring,

The Brahmin at his *Vedas*, engaging.

All that's born unexcepting
 claim not the ear for begetting.

None, but he to high-born conforms,
 who the Divine intimation informs.

Lord Kudala Sangama.

87

What merit claim as devotee,
if fear of jeopardy in sanctity,
their life is taboo-ridden,
and look e'en in meat and raiment
for that which is forbidden ?

How regard them Thine,
when they in matrimonial matching
to group and clan exclusive incline ?
Like a woman in period-pollution
finds no cleansing,
pure tho' water be, in ablution.
So avail their devotion,
Lord Kudala Sangama !

88

Cast out and scorned of caste
are they that kill
or feed on foul flesh.

What then means caste to them
or they to caste ?

None but they does caste enfold
who, all men in well-being hold
are devotees of—
Lord Kudala Sangama.

89

How in contumely call
Siryala, a huckster
or Machayya, a washerman ?

How deride and designate
Kakkaya as cobbler,
Chennaya as outcaste,
and boast myself a Brahmin ?

Wouldn't I a laughing stock be,
with demeanour, so ludicrous
'fore my Lord Kudala Sangama ?

90

Was not Vyasa, a fisherwoman's son ?
and Markandeya of an outcaste ?
and Mandodari, begotten of a frog ?

Oh ! Vain then to caste cling
as no one can tell
how your origins spring !

Your own Agastya was a fowler,
Durvasa, a cobbler
and Kasyapa, a blacksmith !

And mark this :—

The sage Kaundinya was a barber—
So the three worlds avow !

Low birth then as the world would deem
is not the same in the Lord's esteem !

True Shiva Bhaktha is the one HE'd name
for the well-born title's rightful claim !

Lord Kudala Sangama.

91

Should I with caste conceit
draw the line so explicit
between *Jangama* and *Jangama*,

Wouldn't I invite the anathema ?
For this commission, -
my daily *Linga* devotion
serves but as rite, remission !

My bloated pride blinds
my better sense see
Linga from *Linga*, disparate !

Such my sorry state,
alike to a cowherd that
among the cattle discriminate
and some from pen liberate.

Thus my body e'er to devotion aspires
tho' my mind with the world conspires !

My Lord Kudala Sangama.

92

On the same earth stands
the outcaste's hovel
and the deity's temple !

Whether for ritual or for rinsing
isn't the water, same ?

To one who knows himself,
all castes coalesce as one,
even as salvation's sixfold path
leads but to the same end.

He that knows THEE verily
knows THEE but as ONE—

My Lord Kudala Sangama.

93

Like the lamb led
to the sacrificial fire
blithely nibbles the green leaves
adorning the altar—
unmindful of its doom awaiting,
deeming most the passing present,
so prospers all mortal life
O Lord Kudala Sangama !

94

O dear lamb !
Cry unto the Lord and lay
thy cause before Him.

In vain were thou slain
to flatt'ring unction claim,
this, thy slayers have done !
Make thy pleading known
before those that propound
the *Vedas* and the *Shastras*.

Thou shalt surely be avenged
by my Lord Kudala Sangama.

95

What manner of faith that be
that enjoins not compassion ?

To love all that breathes
by those that dwell on earth,
is ever HIS full satisfaction,
the Author of all being.

None but compassion, then
the fount and spring of true faith,
shall HE ever acknowledge—
Lord Kudala Sangama.

96

These commandments
engrave in thy heart—

Thou shalt not steal
nor kill.

Let no falsehood foul thy tongue ;
nor anger burn thy brow.

Bear with one another,
and suffer all men.

Stand not high in thy own esteem.

So shall thy ways
both of heart and demeanour
proclaim thy purity ;
and shall favour find
Of Lord Kudala Sangama.

98

97

When strokes descend on thee
receive them in thy hand.

Likewise to abuse, unfluster'd stand.
Whate'er my portion in previous birth,
behold the joys of this day stand !

The reward of worship, entire in hand !
Lord Kudala Sangama.

98

None lesser than I, I hold ;
and I ne'er can behold
a greater than Shiva's devotee.
By Thy feet and my mind,
this I affirm—
as the sole truth, and
the same, my life confirm.
Lord Kudala Sangama.

99

They be my patrons
who strike me.

They that revile me
I regard my own.

They be my parents
who rebuke me.

They, my masters all
who despitefully use me ; and

they my brethren, all
who mock and deride me.

And they that flatter
with fulsome praise,
be they that impale me
on a golden stake—

Lord Kudala Sangama !

100

Coldly sublime, and ne'er
swerved by fear or favour,
the *Sharana* is severely just.
Justice, spelt Truth in act,
it stings !

Thus, arm'd, he dares the world's might ;
and trails paths of shining light,
dower'd by the glorious light
Of Lord Kudala Sangama !

70

101

Pray not I to shield me, Lord
From the buffetings of the body ;
nor do I implore that

Thou shouldst endow the means
for my daily bread.

“ Man is what he thinks ”.

Whatever be, penury or pelf,
I neither rejoice nor reject.

And never stand to men beholden
nor Thee enburden

My Lord Kudala Sangama.

102

Of this, Thou and Thy saints
be witness as I avow—

that I keep no store
neither for today or tomorrow,
be it a strand of gold
Or a shred of cloth.

All that I have and possess
but to *Sharanas* alone belong.
Lord Kudala Sangama.

I plough the field and cultivate
for the worship of the *Guru*.

To serve the *Linga*, I ply a trade.
I serve another, and my wage render
as *Jangama Dasoha*.

Whate'er work I undertake
Thy just reward e'er awaits.
All rewards received from Thee
to thine own service I dedicate.
Thou be witness to my vow

"Thy wealth to Thy cause"—
My Lord Kudala Sangama.

With flatt'ring lips,
my own impale me on a golden stake!

Alas! with the burden of praise
my body has split in twain.

E'en Thy meed of praise, Lord,
like a sharp shaft has struck me!

O my Lord! I am stricken and hurt
beyond what I could bear.

If Thou art on my side, I plead,
protect from praise and shield me.
Lord Kudala Sangama.

105

I aspire not to Brahma's status
nor to that of Vishnu
nor of Rudra either.

I never crave for such distinction.

But this my constant aim
that Thy Grace grant
as my life's consummation
Thy great devotees' holy feet
as fitting benediction.
Lord Kudala Sangama.

106

I went abegging, Lord,
from door to door,
to fill my needy bowl
with devotion,
as poor was I in this regard.

I stood pleading at Kakkayya's house,
and asked for alms at Chennayya's,
and held out my bowl at Dasayya's too.
Filled to the brim, was my bowl
with the ancient saints, all
adding their mite for good measure!
Lord Kudala Sangama.

" O Basava, come, tell me " queried I my SELF—
" Are there true devotees on earth ?"

" No, none, none is there " my SELF replied

" I, the only one in that category
Who still remains "

" And all others have made
" The *Jangama* or *Linga* grade
" Or one with Lord Sangamesh hailed " !

On the soil of devotion
 Guru as seed sprouts ;
Then as leaf appears the *Linga*.

Branches of *Linga* bear
flowers in bloom for thoughts,
which in season turn
as young fruits for actions.

These mature and mellow
by devotion's inspiring ;
and full ripen'd they, anon
to earth's dusty claim return.

But behold ! 'fore each could
 finish the fall,
" Mine own " claimed HE
 by HIS call.
Lord Kudala Sangama.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

ON THE VACHANAS INCLUDED IN THE BOOK

Vachanas : These are sayings in terse pithy poetic-prose in the Kannada language giving expression to the outpouring of the souls of the great saints of Sri Basaveswara's times. They are similar to the ancient *Upanishadic* sayings of the great saints of Vedic times. The Absolute Reality is addressed by the saints at the end of each of the *Vachanas* with a name chosen by them, and very often the names are significant in their own way. The *Vachanas* of Basaveswara are addressed to what he terms *Kudala Sangama Deva*.

The Veerashaiva conception of Ultimate Reality known to them as *Parashiva Brahman* is that it is formless, and that it cannot be conceived by the mind or perceived by our eyes, ears, or other sense organs. *Shakthi*, which may be referred to as Its energy, transforms itself into the world at the time of creation and the world is absorbed in It at the time of dissolution. The world is not imaginary as conceived in Sri Shankara's philosophy; is it real though it is not as permanent as *Parashiva Brahman*. The souls of men are sparks out of the great fire, the *Parashiva Brahman*. Men are born again and again till by devotion, knowledge, austerity and unselfish work, etc., they are merged in *Parabrahman*, just as river water is merged in ocean water. The world consisting of numberless living and non-living objects, is not entirely separate from *Parashiva Brahman* as it is formed out of the undivided energy of the *Brahman*. This conception of unity in multiplicity is the keystone of the Veerashaiva philosophy. The idea of the mingling of souls, the sparks of the Great Fire, in the Great Fire, the *Parashiva Brahman*, is inherent in the word *Kudala*, the Union thus formed is conveyed in the word *Sangama*, and the word *Deva* connotes the Effulgent referred to in each of the *Vachanas* as *Kudala Sangama Deva*.

Vachana (1): God is in a way potent when He becomes many in the act of creation. How was He before the world was formed? Did He exist at all? One cannot say that what is not patent does not exist. Heat is latent in water, even before it becomes patent. The sweetness in fruit is not apparent in the juice of the plant. But the fruit could not be sweet if sweetness did not exist in the juice of the plant. The smell in the flower cannot be found in the bud; but it must have been latent in the bud before it became patent in the flower. Similarly, love becomes patent in a young lady though it must have been latent in her when she was a child, for something cannot come out of nothing. These examples are given to show how God exists before the world is created.

Vachana (2): The conception that the world is the form of the Formless and that it is the limb of the Limbless is found in this *Vachana*.

Vachana (3): This *Vachana* deals with an important aspect of Veerashaivism with reference to the technique of worship. Veerashaivism does not allow the worship of idols. Worship in temples is prohibited; but for contemplation of the Formless, some kind of medium is necessary to fix the mind upon. Mesmerists, for instance, practise by concentrating the mind on a black round spot against a white background. The *Linga* on which Veerashaivas concentrate their mind at the time of worship serves this purpose, and much more. Just as a mesmerist gazes on the subject to influence him, the preceptor gazes on the disciple at the time of initiation (*deeksha*) and draws the spirit of the disciple into the *Ishta Linga* which the disciple has to wear and worship throughout his lifetime. This worship is only a means of concentrating on subtler *Lingas*, known as *Prana Linga* and *Bhava Linga*. The following, which is necessary to explain these terms, is a short extract from Maharshi Aurobindo's *Kena Upanishad*: "The ear hears the sound, the eye sees the form; but hearing and vision are particular operations of the life force in us used by the mind in order to put itself into communication with the world in which the mental being dwells and to interpret it in the forms of sense. The life force shapes

them, the mind uses them, but something other than the life force and the mind enables them to shape and to use their objects and their instruments."

The Veerashaivas call the life-force *Prana Linga*, and *Parashiva Brahman*, which directs the life-force, is *Bhava Linga*. If the source of electricity can be compared to *Bhava Linga*, the *Para Brahman*, the electric current can be compared to the life current, the *Prana Linga* and the light in the bulb can be compared to *Ishita Linga*, while the bulb itself is comparable to the body. The presence of the *Ishita Linga* on the God is intended to remind the devotee to keep his body pure. The presence of the *Prana Linga* is intended to keep the intellect of the devotee pure. This explanation gives a rough idea of what cannot be easily explained briefly, the conception of the three *Lingas* very often referred in the *Vachanas*. This *Vachana* refers to the *Ishita Linga* (the gross *Linga*) having come to the hands of the devotee as the essence of the Absolute, *Parashiva Brahman*, for the purpose of worship, in a small form though the Absolute itself is without limits.

Vachana (4): This *Vachana* prohibits the worship of many Gods, a practice which prevailed to a great extent at the time of Sri Basaveswara and still exists to some extent amongst ignorant men. Sri Basaveswara declares there is only one God and not many, though the names may be many.

Vachana (5): The different petty gods and goddesses referred to in the previous *Vachana* are mentioned in this *Vachana*.

Vachanas (6) and (7): The purport of these *Vachanas* is that God is sure to answer the call of the devotee if it is sincere.

Vachana (8): Ravana, referred to in this *Vachana*, was the King of Lanka. He is supposed to have sung the *Sama Veda* in praise of Lord Shiva. But this did not come in the way of his being killed by Sri Rama, whose wife he had carried away. Brahma, referred to in this *Vachana*, is one of the three Gods of the Hindus. He is said to have uttered a lie before Lord Shiva.

His name is connected with the *Vedas*. This did not prevent one of his heads being cut off by Lord Shiva. Neither melody in song nor recital of *Vedas* is of help, and devotion alone elevates.

Vachana (13): The bird referred to in this *Vachana* is supposed to be always looking forward to moonlight, which makes it happy. The flower referred to is regarded as opening with joy when the sun rises. The bee referred to is always thinking of sucking the sweet-scented pollen of flowers. The devotion of a devotee to God is compared to the longing of the bird, the flower and the bee for what they are devoted to.

Vachana (14): The rise and fall of the tides in the sea depends upon the rise of the moon. Poets generally make use of this to show friendship between the sea and the moon. At the time of an eclipse, the legend says that the serpent Rahu devours portions of the moon. Agastya, a sage, is supposed to have drunk the entire ocean. The *Vachana* says that the friendship between the moon and the sea did not induce the moon to come to the help of the sea when it was drunk by sage Agastya, and that it did not induce the sea to go to the help of the moon when it was attacked by the serpent Rahu. This *Vachana* says that it is only God who is the friend of the friendless.

Vachana (15): There is among all Shaivas a conception that men are cattle (*Pashu*) and that they are protected by *Pashupati*, the Lord of Cattle

Vachana (18): The word "tumbi", used in this *Vachana*, has two meanings. When it is used as a verb it means to fill. When it is used as a noun, it is a bee. There is a play on the word *tumbi* in this *Vachana*.

Vachana (23): Whenever Hindus propose to do something good, they want to know whether the time is auspicious. Sri Basaveswara insists that one must proceed to do what is good without waiting for what is termed an auspicious time.

Vachana (26): This *Vachana* is important as it stresses the necessity of a good life in this world for securing a good life in the world above. The world is referred to in this *Vachana* as *Karatharana Kammata*, i.e., the mint of the Lord, in which men are minted. Coins which sound good in a mint will pass as sound coins in the world outside. Similarly, a man who stands the test in this world will stand the test in the other world too. The idea is that the fire of suffering in this world will purify a man, just as fire purifies impure gold and makes it pure gold fit for coins.

Vachanas (28) and (29): It is useless to think of the next world, and the real world of Gods is created in this world by leading a life of good conduct.

Vachana (30): In this *Vachana*, Sri Basaveswara prefers service in this world to life in the next world.

Vachana (33): The earth gives support to the sea. Nagnendra, the serpent king, is supposed to give support to the earth, and he in turn is supposed to be merely a ring of Parvati, wife of Shiva. Parvati is referred to as half of the body of Shiva, who is therefore superior to all of them. But all the same he cannot be said to be the supreme, as he is in the mind of saints, who are therefore superior to him. The *Vachana* is intended to extol the saints and make it appear that they are in a better position than God.

Vachana (41): Veerashaivas do not believe in making pilgrimages or bathing in sacred streams. Avoiding greed and adultery is better than bathing in what are regarded as sacred streams. There is a play on the word 'tari', used in this *Vachana*. It means to avoid when used as a verb, and when used as a noun, it means a stream.

Vachana (56): There were saints even prior to Basaveswara, and their *Vachanas* are referred to by him as the *Vachanas* of the ancients.

Vachana (57): This *Vachana* refers to the power of a magician to cure snake-bite by magic. It says that nothing can cure a person bitten by the snake of wealth.

Vachana (60): Mari is one of the petty deities supposed to be troublesome to human beings.

Vachana (65): Chenniah, referred to here, was a devotee who belonged to what is known as an untouchable caste. Machiah also belonged to a low caste.

Vachana (69): *Linga*, referred to in this *Vachana*, has been explained previously. *Jangamas* are saints respected as moving gods. *Prasada* is what is offered and received back from the preceptor (*Guru*) and the *Jangama* and *Linga* referred to above.

Vachana (74): According to some philosophers like Sri Shankara, one cannot attain salvation unless one gives up the world. According to Sri Basaveswara, even married persons can attain salvation by devotion, knowledge, austerity and unselfish work.

Vachana (77): At the time of Sri Basaveswara mirrors were made of metal. Though mirrors and dishes are made of the same metal, the metal in the mirror shines as it is properly cleaned. Similarly, the difference between a man and a saint lies in the latter leading a pure life devoted to God.

Vachana (79): People who offer food to *Linga* but refuse to feed a *Jangama* are compared to people who worship idols of snakes but do not hesitate to kill living snakes.

Vachana (80): It used to be very common for learned people to engage in disputations and this is referred to as useless; what is required is a good life devoted to the *Sharanas*, the pious devotees of God.

Vachana (85): Much is made of a person belonging to a high caste and to a great family. Basaveswara takes pride,

though he is a Brahmin by birth, in saying he belongs to the family of the untouchable Chenniah and that he is related to Kakkiah, who is said to be of a low caste.

Vachana (86): The belief of Hindus in general that caste depends upon birth and not on merit is attacked in this *Vachana*, and the same idea runs through the next few *Vachanas*.

Vachanas (93) and (94): The lower classes believe that diseases like small-pox are caused by the disfavour of petty Goddesses like Mari, and that by killing sheep or other animals and offering them to her, she will be appeased. The higher classes believed that by killing goats and other animals in what were known as *Yagnas* and offering them to the Gods, they would acquire merit. Both these practices are condemned and it is asserted that all religions are based on kindness.

Vachana (103): One has to work and earn money not to save it for onself and one's children, but for the purpose of offering it to the *Guru*, *Linga* and *Jangama*, explained previously.

Vachana (105): Sri Basaveswara prefers to live in this world, spending his life in the service of men, to obtaining the status of Brahma, Vishnu or Rudra, the three Gods of the Hindus.

Vachana (108): According to some philosophers like Sri Shankara, what leads to salvation is knowledge alone and not action. According to Veerashaivism, salvation results from action based on determination in accordance with knowledge. This idea is beautifully expounded in this *Vachana*. Veerashaivas regard perfection in this world as salvation. The word used is *nish-patti*, which means perfection. Perfection comes out of good action and good action comes out of *vichara*, i.e., determination based on knowledge. Reliance on *Linga* helps proper determination and the basis for *Linga* is the *Guru*, the preceptor. The basis for *Guru* is *Bhakti*, i.e., devotion. Hence devotion is the earth, and the preceptor is the seedling on it. The *Linga* is the leaf developed on the preceptor. *Vichara* or determination based on knowledge is the flower which gives rise to the green fruit of

achara, i.e., action, and it ripens into perfection, referred to as a ripe fruit.

.....we can see some parallels between the great Kannada mystics and many of the mystics of the world. For example, if we take the Greek philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato and Phaedo, they are present in the *Anubhava Mantapa* at Kalyan, Prabhudeva representing Socrates, Basava representing Plato and Channabasava representing Phaedo. If we go to the Christian period, we see that, corresponding to the great four representatives of Christianity, namely, Jesus Christ, St. Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther, we have among Karnataka mystics their representatives in the personalities of Prabhudeva, Basava, Sidharama and Chennabasava who adorn the *Anubhava Mantapa*.

DR. R. D. RANADE,
(in *Pathway to God in Kannada Literature*).

Whatever the legend may say about Basava, the fact is fully clear that he was the first Indian free-thinker. He might be called the Luther of India.

ARTHUR MILES.

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